

## Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 ACDA-12 PM-05

NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 DODE-00

L-03 EB-08 /106 W

-----074332 101747Z /46

R 100943Z JUL 78

FM AMEMBASSY PRAIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0207

INFO AMEMBASSY BISSAU POUCH

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR POUCH

USINT HAVANA

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY MAPUTO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PRAIA 0253

E.O. 11652: XGDS 4

TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PINR, EAIR, MOPS, AO, CV

SUBJECT: USE OF AMILCAR CABRAL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT TO

FERRY CUBAN MILITARY AND OTHER PERSONNEL

REF: PRAIA 0180

1. UNTIL AROUND THE END OF FEBRUARY OF THIS YEAR ONE FLIGHT PER WEEK OF CUBAN AND ANGOLAN AIRWAYS EN ROUTE LUANDA PASSED THROUGH AMILCAR CABRAL AIRPORT ON THE ISLAND OF SAL. THESE FLIGHTS NORMALLY CARRIED AROUND 160 PEOPLE, MOST IF NOT ALL CUBANS.

2. AT THE BEGINNING OF MARCH THESE FLIGHTS INCREASED TO TWICE WEEKLY. ONCE AGAIN THE PLANES SEEMED TO BE FULLY  
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BOOKED. THE PASSENGERS WERE ALMOST ALL YOUNG MALES WITH CLOSELY CROPPED HAIR AND IN GOOD PHYSICAL CONDITION.

3. AT THE END OF MARCH THE FLIGHTS INCREASED DRAMATICALLY TO SEVERAL A WEEK, AND OCCASIONALLY TWICE DAILY. THE TRAFFIC SEEMED TO BE ALL IN ONE DIRECTION (I.E. HAVANA TO POINTS IN AFRICA, MOSTLY ANGOLA). COMMENT: A SOURCE WHO

WORKS AT THE AIRPORT TOLD CHARGE THAT HE HAD CONFIRMED WITH RADIO AND RADAR OPERATORS AT AIRPORT THE IMPRESSION THAT ALL OF THIS TRAFFIC WAS HEADED SOUTH AND NO LOADED AIRCRAFT WERE RETURNING THROUGH SAL. END COMMENT. THE PLANES CARRIED SOMEWHAT REDUCED NUMBER OF PASSENGERS, NORMALLY AROUND 130 TO 135. ALL OF THE AIRCRAFT APPEARED TO BE ILUYSHINS AND BOEING 707S, AND ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS ILUYSHINS BEARING AEROFLOT MARKINGS CARRYING CUBAN PERSONNEL PASSED THROUGH SAL.

4. THE DAILY (OCCASIONALLY TWICE A DAY) FLIGHTS OF CUBAN AND ANGOLAN AIRWAYS AIRCRAFT THROUGH SAL CONTINUED AT LEAST UNTIL THE END OF MAY AND POSSIBLY INTO JUNE. AT THAT TIME THEY WERE REDUCED TO TWICE WEEKLY WHICH IS THE CURRENT PATTERN.

5. KNOWLEDGE OF THE USE OF SAL AS A FERRYING POINT FOR CUBAN PERSONNEL BECAME FAIRLY WIDESPREAD IN CAPE VERDE, DESPITE THE STRENGTHENING OF SECURITY MEASURES AT THE AIRPORT. THE PORTUGUESE AMBASSADOR, THE BRAZILIAN CONSUL AND THE U.S. CHARGE AND TDY VICE CONSUL ALL WERE AT THE AIRPORT AT DIFFERENT TIMES WHEN THE CUBAN PASSENGERS DISEMBARKED AND ENTERED THE TRANSIT LOUNGE OF AMILCAR CABRAL AIRPORT. THE CUBANS WOULD REMAIN IN THE TRANSIT LOUNGE FOR AT LEAST NINETY MINUTES WHILE THEIR AIRCRAFT TOOK ON FUEL AND WAS SERVICED.

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6. THE PERSONNEL TRANSITING AMILCAR CABRAL WERE GENERALLY A HOMOGENOUS GROUP (YOUNG, TRIM, CURIOUS, SHORT HAIR, GOOD PHYSICAL CONDITION, GOOD DISCIPLINE, UNIFORMS IN EXCELLENT CONDITION). IN THE GROUPS OBSERVED BY WESTERN DIPLOMATS ASSIGNED TO PRAIA THERE ALWAYS SEEMED TO BE SEVERAL OLDER MEN WHO WERE IN CHARGE OF THE GROUP. THESE OLDER MEN SEEMED ALSO TO ACT AS LIAISON OFFICERS WITH THE AEROFLOT PERSONNEL WHO MET THE PLANES. SOVIET EMBASSY PERSONNEL FROM PRAIA WERE ALSO OBSERVED MEETING THE PLANES.

7. REPORTS FROM VARIOUS SOURCES SEEM TO POINT TO THE PASSAGE THROUGH SAL DURING THE MONTHS OF APRIL AND MAY OF MORE THAN TEN THOUSAND (10,000) CUBANS. A SOUTH AFRICAN TECHNICIAN WORKING AT AMILCAR CABRAL TOLD THE EMBASSY THAT HE HAD COUNTED EIGHTY SEVEN (87) FLIGHTS IN APRIL AND MAY CARRYING CUBANS VIA SAL, AND ALL OF THESE FLIGHTS HEADED TOWARD AFRICA.

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AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PRAIA 0253

8. ON 18 JUNE THE SUNDAY TELEGRAPH OF LONDON PUBLISHED AN ARTICLE ON THE USE OF AMILCAR CABRAL AIRPORT AS A POINT OF TRANSIT FOR CUBANS HEADED FOR AFRICA. ON JUNE 20 THE CAPE VERDEAN AMBASSADOR TO PORTUGAL, CORSINO FORTES, FORMALLY DENIED THE UTILIZATION OF THE AIRPORT IN SAL BY SOVIET PLANES FOR THE TRANSPORTATION OF WAR MATERIAL OR CUBAN TROOPS TO ANGOLA.

9. ON JUNE 24 LOCAL WEEKLY "VOZDIPOVO" PUBLISHED CAREFULLY CONSTRUCTED BUT UNATTRIBUTED DENIAL OF REPORTS THAT THE ISLAND OF SAL WAS BEING USED AS POINT FOR CUBAN MILITARY PERSONNEL. IN FACT ARTICLE WAS BASED ON AMBASSADOR FORTES' STATEMENT TO THE LISBON PRESS (SEE LISBON 4580).

10. DURING AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON PRESIDENT PEREIRA ON JULY 6  
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THE LATTER CONFIRMED PASSAGE OF CUBANS THROUGH SAL. PRESIDENT NOTED AND DESCRIBED THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS AND PRESSURES WHICH BEAR ON GOCV IN THIS SITUATION, I.E. THE EXISTENCE OF A

CIVIL AIR AGREEMENT BETWEEN CAPE VERDE AND CUBA, THE "CIVILIAN" STATUS OF THE PASSENGERS AND THE CLOSE RELATIONS OF GOCV WITH CUBA. MORE IMPORTANT ARE THE COMMITMENTS AND CLOSE AND FRATERNAL RELATIONS EXISTING BETWEEN THE GOCV AND THE GOVERNMENT OF ANGOLA AND BETWEEN THE MPLA AND THE PAIGC. THE GOCV IS COMMITTED TO THE SUPPORT AND DEFENSE OF THE NETO GOVERNMENT AND RECOGNIZES THAT AT LEAST FOR THE PRESENT THE GOVERNMENT OF ANGOLA NEEDS CUBAN PRESENCE TO SURVIVE (SEE PRAIA A-6 OF MARCH 30). PEREIRA ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE WAS CONCERNED ABOUT THE EXPANDING CUBAN INVOLVEMENT IN AFRICA BUT CLEARLY IMPLIED THAT UNTIL THE NEED FOR THE CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA IS REMOVED, HE DOES NOT SEE HOW HIS GOVERNMENT CAN DECLINE TO AUTHORIZE THE PASSAGE OF CUBAN PERSONNEL THROUGH SAL.

11. COMMENT: IT IS CLEAR THAT MANY FACTORS, WEIGHTS, PRESSURES AND CONSIDERATIONS ARE INVOLVED IN THE CAPE VERDEAN DECISION TO ALLOW THE USE OF SAL AS A TRANSIT POINT FOR CUBAN PERSONNEL HEADED FOR POINTS OF AFRICA. PEREIRA WOULD PROBABLY RATHER NOT HAVE THE CUBANS GOING THROUGH SAL BUT SEES THE CUBAN PRESENCE IN ANGOLA, AT LEAST FOR THE PRESENT, AS BEING NECESSARY AND JUSTIFIED. THE PASSAGE OF CUBANS THROUGH SAL IS LIKELY TO CONTINUE.  
MARKS

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